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بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Introduction

With the alleged birthday of the Prophet, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم, drawing near, there are a number of issues that every Muslim must know about what is referred to as "Al-Mawlid an-Nabawī" or "Al-Mawlid ash-Sharīf". In addition to the broad points related to the celebration of the Mawlid that I will discuss with this article, I have also discussed the specific evidence used to sanction the Mawlid in a companion piece to this article, entitled "Examination of the Arguments Used to Permit the Mawlid".

We Don't Know When the Prophet, صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, Was Born

There is an overabundance of opinions concerning when the Prophet, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم, was born, and they range from being "Dha'īf (weak)" to completely baseless. And they range from some attributed to Companions all the way down to some claimed by modern day astronomers. Below is a short summary of these opinions, and I have limited the list to ten of the opinions that have been narrated:

- 1. The second of *Rabī' al-Awwal*. This was mentioned by Ibn Sa'd, ¹ Ibn Sayyid an-Nās, ² Ibn Kathīr, ³ attributing it to Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in "*Al-Istī'āb*", Al-Ya'qūbī, ⁴ and Ibn al-Jawzī attributed it to the majority, ⁵ and many others. And narrated by Al-Wāqidī from Abū Ma'shar Nujayḥ Ibn 'Abdir-Raḥmān al-Madanī. Abū Ma'shar is "*Dha'īf*", as declared so by Abū Dāwūd and Ad-Dāragutnī. ⁶
- 2. The eighth of *Rabī al-Awwal*. This was narrated by Mālik, 'Aqīl, Yūnus Ibn Yazīd and others from Az-Zuhrī from Muḥammad Ibn Jubayr Ibn Muṭ'im. It was mentioned by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr ⁷ and many others. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī mentioned that there is a consensus from the historians that this is the correct date. ⁸ Al-Qasṭalānī claimed that it is the opinion of the majority. ⁹

¹ "Aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā", 1/101

² "'Uyūn al-Athar", 1/79

³ "Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah", Vol. 2/260

^{4 &}quot;At-Tārīkh", Vol. 2/7

⁵ "Al-Muntaṭḥim", Vol. 2/245

⁶ Look to "Tah'thīb at-Tahthīb", Vol. 10/419.

⁷ "Al-Istī'āb", Vol. 1/31

⁸ "Sharḥ Matn al-Hamziyyah", pg. 26

⁹ "Al-Mawāhib al-Ladaniyyah", Vol. 1/140-141

- 3. The tenth of *Rabī' al-Awwal*. Ibn Kathīr mentioned it from Ibn 'Asākir. ¹⁰ It was also mentioned by Ibn Sa'd ¹¹ and others. However in this chain there is Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar Ibn Wāqid al-Laythī who is "*Matrūk*", Is'ḥāq Ibn Abī Farqah who is "*Matrūk*" and Abū Bakr Ibn 'Abdillāh who is accused of fabricating *Aḥādīth*. ¹²
- 4. The eleventh of Rabī' al-Awwal. Mentioned by Ibn al-Jawzī ¹³ without any chain.
- 5. The eighteenth of Rabī' al-Awwal. Ibn Kathīr attributed it to the majority. 14
- 6. The twelfth of *Ramadhān*. This was mentioned by Ibn al-Kalbī, as was mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar, and he said it is "*Shāth*". ¹⁵ This is based on a Ḥadīth that Ath-Thahabī declared as "*Sāait*". ¹⁶
- 7. In *Rabī' al-Ākhar*. This was mentioned by Al-Qasṭalānī without any chain and with the phrasing of uncertainty. ¹⁷
- 8. The Day of the Elephant. Narrated by Al-Haaraaand Ath-Thahabī mentioned it as well, ¹⁹ and he weakened this opinion. ²⁰
- 9. The first Monday of $Rab\bar{i}'$ al-Awwal. Mentioned by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr ²¹ and Ibn Sayyid an-Nās with the phrase of uncertainty. ²²
- 10. The Twelfth of $Rab\bar{l}'$ al-Awwal. This was taken by Ibn Is'ḥāq, 23 Ibn Ḥibbān, 24 Ibn Khaldūn, 25 Ibn Sayyid an-Nās, 26 and others. And all of the narrations of this date are weak or extremely weak. 27

¹⁰ "Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah", Vol. 2/260

¹¹ "Aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā", Vol. 1/100

¹² Look to "At-Tagrīb", (#7,973)

¹³ "Al-Muntaṭḥam", Vol. 2/245

¹⁴ "Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah", Vol. 2/260

^{15 &}quot;Fat'h al-Bārī", Vol. 7/164

¹⁶ "As-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah", pg. 25

¹⁷ "Al-Mawāhib", Vol. 1/140

^{18 &}quot;Al-Mustadrak 'Alaş-Şaḥīḥayn", 2/603

¹⁹ "As-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah", pg. 25

²⁰ "Mukhtasar al-Mustadrak", Vol. 2/1057

²¹ "Al-Istī'āb", Vol. 1/30

²² "'Uyūn al-Athar"</sup>, Vol. 1/79

²³ "As-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah", Vol. 1/158

²⁴ "Ath-Thigāt", Vol. 1/14-15

²⁵ "At-Tārīkh", Vol. 2/394

²⁶ "'Uyūn al-Athar", Vol. 1/79

²⁷ Look to "Mawsū'at Nadhrat an-Na'īm", Vol. 1/40.

The Celebrating of the *Mawlid* Was Invented By the *Fāṭimiyyah* of Banī 'Ubayd in Egypt

The historian Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf aṣ-Ṣāliḥī (d. 943 H.) mentioned from *Imām* As-Sakhāwī (d. 902 H.) that he said: "Performing *Al-Mawlid ash-Sharīf* was not narrated from any of the Righteous predecessors in the three virtuous generations. Rather it only took place after that."

And the historian Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī al-Miqrīzī (d. 845 H.) said: "And the Fāṭimī Khulafā' had celebrations and festivals all year round. And they were the festivals of the new year, the festivals of the beginning of the year, the Day of 'Āshūrā', the birthday of the Prophet, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِما, the birthday of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, رضي الله عنه, the birthday of Al-Ḥasan and Al-Ḥusayn, السلام, the birthday of Fāṭimah az-Zahrā', السلام, "and he continued on."

And this is what is well known: that the first people to celebrate the *Mawlid* were the $F\bar{a}$ timiyyah in Egypt. This was mentioned also by Al-Qalqashandī, ³⁰ Ḥasan As-Sandūbī, ³¹ many more.

It is Not a Bid'ah Ḥasanah (Good Innovation)

Some claim that while this was not known amongst the *Salaf*, it is considered a good innovation, and they use the statements of some scholars claiming that it is such. However, let us look at this matter in detail:

On the authority of Jābir Ibn 'Abdillāh, that the Prophet, صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, said:

"As indeed, the best speech is the Speech of Allāh, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad. And the worst of matters are those which are invented, and every Bid'ah is a misquidance." 32

And on the authority of Al-'Irbādh Ibn Sāriyah, that the Prophet, صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, said:

²⁸ "Subul al-Hudā war-Rashād", Vol. 1/439

²⁹ "Al-Khiţaţ", Vol. 1/490

³⁰ "Şubḥ al-A'shā", Vol. 3/498

³¹ "Tārīkh al-Iḥtifāl Bil-Mawlid an-Nabawī", pg. 69

³² Collected by Muslim in his "Şaḥīḥ", (#867)

"And avoid the newly invented matters, because every newly invented matter is a Bid'ah, and every Bid'ah is a misquidance." 33

And the Companion Mu'āth Ibn Jabal, رضى الله عنه, said:

"And beware of that which has been innovated, as indeed, whatever is innovated is misguidance." 34

And Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, رضى الله عنهما, said:

"Every Bid'ah is a misguidance, even if the people see it as good." 35

Imām Mālik (d. 179 H.) said: "Whoever innovates a *Bid'ah* in *Islām* and believes it is good, then he is claiming that Muḥammad, صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, betrayed the Message, because Allāh says:

♦This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you *Islām* as your religion.**▶**

So whatever was not from the religion that day would not be of the religion today." ³⁶

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 H.) stated: "The fundamentals of the Sunnah in our opinion are to hold to that which the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, were upon, to follow them and to abandon Bid'ah. And every Bid'ah is a misguidance." ³⁷

And concerning dividing *Bid'ah* into *Wājib*, *Mandūb*, *Mubāḥ*, *Makrūh* and *Muḥarram*, *Imām* ash-Shāṭibī (d. 790 H.) said, "Indeed, this categorization is an invented matter, which no *Shar'ī* evidence indicates." ³⁸

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795 H.) said, "As for what has taken place in the words of the *Salaf* from the considering of some of *Bid'ahs* to be good, then that is only from the linguistic *Bid'ahs*, not the *Shar'ī*-based ones." ³⁹

³³ Collected by Ahmad (#17,275) and Abū Dāwūd (#4,607)

³⁴ Collected by Abū Dāwūd in his "Sunan", (#4,611)

³⁵ Collected by Al-Lālakā'ī in "Sharḥ Uṣūl I'tiqād Ahl As-Sunnah", Vol. 1/92

³⁶ "Al-I'tiṣām", Vol. 1/49

³⁷ "Thamm at-Ta'wīl", pg. 32, by Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī

^{38 &}quot;Al-I'tisām", Vol. 1/191

³⁹ "Jāmi' al-'Ulūmi Wal-Ḥikam", Ḥadīth #28/pg. 233

And what is meant by linguistic *Bid'ah* is something that was started and/or revived based upon clear *Islāmic* Textual evidence.

It is an imitation of the Christians in their celebrating what they claim to be the birthday of the Messenger 'Īsā Ibn Maryam, صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

It is a clear form of imitating non-Muslims in their actions that they themselves are known for.

'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, رضي الله عنهما, narrated that the Messenger of Allāh, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ , said:

"And whoever imitates a people, he is from them." 40

And 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ, رضى الله عنهما, said:

"Whoever lives in the land of the non-Arabs, participates in their *Nayrūz* (Persian New Year) and their *Mahrajān* (Vernal equinox celebration), and imitates them until he dies while in that state, he will be resurrected with them on the Day of Resurrection." ⁴¹

And the Sunnah is filled with evidences forbidding imitating the disbelievers.

Celebrations Are Specifically Legislated Acts of Worship in Islām

Celebrations are matters which are legislated as an act of worship, not a matter of worldly customs. This is evident in the Ḥadīth of 'Ā'ishah, رصَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, in which the Prophet, رصَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, said about the Day of Al-Fitr or the Day of Al-Adh'ḥā:

"Verily, every people has its celebration and verily this is our celebration." 42

⁴⁰ Collected by Aḥmad in his "Musnad" Vol. 2/50 and Abū Dāwūd in his "Sunan", (#4,031). This was declared "Ṣaḥīḥ" by Ibn Ḥibbān as mentioned in "Bulūgh al-Marām", (#437), Al-'Irāqī in his Takhrīj of "Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn", Vol. 1/359, Al-Bahūtī in "Kaṣhāf al-Qinā", Vol. 1/286 and others. It was also declared "Jayyid" by Ibn Taymiyyah in "Majmū' al-Fatāwā", Vol. 25/331 and "Ḥasan" by Al-'Asqalānī in "Fat'ḥ al-Bārī", Vol. 10/282 and As-Suyūtī in "Al-Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣaghīr", (#8,593). Although there is some dispute concerning the authenticity of this Ḥadīth, it comes from 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar through two paths: one in the books mentioned above and the second by Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī in "Sharḥ Mushkil al-Athār" (#231). It also comes by the way of Anas Ibn Mālik in Marfū' form in "Akhbār Aṣbahān" Vol. 1/129, and a number of other Ṣaḥābah. And our Shaykh Sulaymān Ibn Nāṣir al-'Alwān stated that it is "Ḥasan".

⁴¹ Collected by Al-Bayhaqī in his "Sunan", (#18,642). It was declared "Ṣaḥīḥ" by Ibn Taymiyyah in "Iqtidhā' aṣ-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafati Ahl al-Jaḥīm", pg. 233 as well as Ibn al-Qayyim in "Aḥkām Ahl ath-Thimmah", Vol. 3/1248.

⁴² Collected by Is'ḥāq Ibn Rāhwayh (#779), Aḥmad (#25,189), Al-Bukhārī (#952), Muslim (#2,016), Ibn Mājah (#1,898), An-Nasā'ī (#1,808) and Abū Ya'lā (#50)

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H.) stated in his explanation of this Ḥadīth: "This is evidence in a number of ways: One of them is that his, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ,'s statement: "Verily, every people has its celebration and verily this is our celebration." Indeed this necessitates each people being unique in their specific 'Id. As He, سبحانه, said:

And for every nation there is a direction to which they face (in their prayers). 43

And He, تعالى, said:

€To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way. ≽ 44

This necessitates each people being unique in their specific direction to face as well as their prescribed law. So if the Jews have an $\bar{I}d$ and the Christians have an $\bar{I}d$ which is specific to them, we do not share it with them just as we do not share their direction of facing in prayer nor their prescribed law. And based upon this as well we would not allow them to share our $\bar{I}d$ with us." ⁴⁵

Also, it has come on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik, رضى الله عنه, who said:

"قَدِمْتُ الْمَدِينَةَ وَلِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ يَوْمَانِ يَلْعَبُونَ فِيهِمَا فِي الجَاهِلِيَّةِ." فقال: "قَدِمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَكُمْ يَوْمَانِ تَلْعَبُونَ فِيهِمَا إِنَّ اللهَ عَرَّ وَجَلَّ أَبْدَلَكُمْ هِِمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُما يَوْمَ الفِطْرِ وَيَوْمَ النَّحْرِ."

"When the Messenger of Allāh, مَلَى اللّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, came to Al-Madīnah, they had two days when they would play. So he said: "What are these two days?" They said: "We used to play on them during the Jāhiliyyah." So the Messenger of Allāh, مَلَى اللّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, said: "Allāh has given you instead of them two days that are better than them: the Day of al-Adh'hā and the Day of al-Fitr." 46

Ibn Taymiyyah, رحمه الله , stated in his explanation of this Ḥadīth: "The way this is used as evidence is that the two days in Jāhiliyyah were not upheld by the Prophet, مَسَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم, nor did he leave them to play during them as they customarily did. Instead he said: 'He has given you two different days in their place.' And something replacing something else necessitates abandoning

⁴³ Sūrat al-Bagarah, 148

⁴⁴ Sūrat al-Mā'idah, 48

^{45 &}quot;Iqtidhā' aş-Şirāt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafati Ahl al-Jaḥīm", pg. 227.

⁴⁶ Collected by Ibn Abī Shaybah (#5,628), 'Abd Ibn Ḥumayd (#1,238), Abū Dāwūd (#1,134), An-Nasā'ī (#1,767) and Abū Ya'lā (#3,820)

what has been replaced. This is because it is not possible for the replacement and the replaced to be joined together at once." ⁴⁷

Ibn Taymiyyah, رحمه الله, also said: "Celebrations are part of the *Sharī'ah*, the clear way and the ritual acts of worship about which Allāh, سبحانه, said:

√To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way. → 48

And He said:

For every nation We have ordained religious ceremonies which they must follow. 49

...like the *Qiblah*, *Ṣalāt* and fasting. So there is no difference between their participation in the celebrations and their participation in all other rituals. So conforming in full with a celebration is conforming to *kufr*, and conforming to some of its branches is conforming in with some of the branches of *kufr*.

Indeed, celebrations are one of the most unique features that distinguish various legislations and among their most prominent symbols, so conforming to them is conforming to the most characteristic legislations of *kufr* and most prominent of its symbols. And there is no doubt that conforming to this may lead to complete *kufr*.

As for its most basic ruling, then at the very least, it is an act of disobedience. This was indicated by the Prophet, \hat{out} , when he said: "Verily, every people has its celebration and verily this is our celebration." ⁵⁰ And this is worse than participating with them in wearing the Zinār ⁵¹ and its likes from their symbols, as those are manmade symbols which are not from the religion, rather the purpose behind them is simply to distinguish between the Muslim and the $k\bar{a}$ fir. As for the celebrations and (religious) rituals, this is part of the religion which is cursed along with its followers, so joining in with it is joining in with something that is a cause of incurring the wrath and punishment of Allāh." ⁵²

So we see that the same address was used for '\(\bar{I}ds\) as was used for the \(\textit{Qiblah}\) of the Muslims. Therefore, '\(\bar{I}ds\) are at the same level of the \(\textit{Qiblah}\), in that we cannot add, subtract or change anything regarding them within our religion.

⁴⁷ "Iqtidhā' aṣ-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafati Ahl al-Jaḥīm", pg. 219.

⁴⁸ Sūrat al-Mā'idah, 48

⁴⁹ Sūrat al-Ḥajj, 67

⁵⁰ Collected by Al-Bukhārī (#952 and #3,931) and Muslim (#892).

⁵¹ This was a type of clothing that was specified as specific to Ahl ath-Thimmah

^{52 &}quot;Iqtidhā' aṣ-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafati Ahl al-Jaḥīm", pg. 241.

An Short List of Statements of the Scholars Concerning Celebrating the Mawlid

Tāj ad-Dīn Al-Fākahānī (d. 734 H.) said: "I do not know any basis for this *Mawlid* in the Book nor the *Sunnah*. And performing it is not narrated from anyone from the Scholars of the *Ummah*, who are the leaders in the religion and who hold steadfast to the narrations of the earlier ones (i.e. predecessors). Rather, it is a *Bid'ah* that was innovated by the useless, and it is the personal desire which the gluttons took advantage of. The evidence for this is that if we were to try to apply the five rulings to it, then we would say: it is either *Wājib*, *Mandūb*, *Mubāḥ*, *Makrūh* or *Muḥarram*. And it is not *Wājib* according to consensus. Nor is it *Mandūb*, because the reality of the *Mandūb* is that which the *Shara'* has requested (from us) but did not place any blame on the one who does not do it. And this is something that the *Shara'* did not give permission for, nor did any of the *Ṣaḥābah* perform it, nor did the *Tābi'īn*, nor did any religiously committed scholars, as far as I know. And this is my answer if I am asked about it in front of Allāh. And it is not possible that it is *Mubāḥ*, as innovating in the religion is not *Mubāḥ* according to the consensus of the Muslims. So nothing is left except that it is *Makrūh* or *Muḥarram*." ⁵³

Ibn al-Ḥāj al-Mālikī (d. 737 H.) stated: "Then if it is free from it (i.e. matters that are Ḥarām in and of themselves), and he only makes food, and intends with the Mawlid, and invites the brothers, and it is free from what has been mentioned earlier, then it is a Bid'ah by the intention itself alone. Because that is an addition to the religion; not from the actions of the Salaf who have passed. And following the Salaf is more deserving, rather, it is more obligatory, than adding an intention to the religion which they did not have. Because they were the people who were most severe in following the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh, مَنلَى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم, and glorifying of him and his Sunnah, صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّم, and they were at the forefront in rushing to that. And it is not narrated from any of them that he had an intention for the Mawlid, and we are followers of them, so we are sufficed by that which sufficed them." 54

And he said: "And out of piety, some of them turned away from this by reading, in place of that, "Al-Bukhārī" or something else. So, even if reading Ḥadīth is, in and of itself, from the greatest means of becoming nearer (to Allāh), and acts of worship, and there is great blessings and much goodness in it, but this is if it is done with the conditions that make it valid in the correct Shar'ī way; not if it is done with the intention of the Mawlid. Do you not see that the Salāt is from the greatest things that brings one nearer to Allāh, with but despite this, if someone did in in other that the legislated time, then it would be something blameworthy and contrary (to the Sharī'ah). So if the Ṣalāt is at this level, then what do you think about something other than it?"

Ash-Shāṭibī (d. 790 H.) stated: "So it is well known that the establishment of the *Mawlid* upon the description that is commonly known amongst the people is an innovated *Bid'ah*, and every

⁵³ "Al-Mawrid Fī 'Amalil-Mawlid", pg. 20-21.

^{54 &}quot;Al-Madkhal", Vol. 2/10

⁵⁵ "Al-Madkhal", Vol. 2/25

Bid'ah is a *Dhalālah* (misguidance). So spending to establish a *Bid'ah* is not allowed, and it being left in one's will is not implemented, rather it is obligatory upon the judge to annul it." ⁵⁶

Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad al-Ḥaffār al-Mālikī (d. 811 H.) said: "The night of the *Mawlid*; The Righteous *Salaf* did not used to gather on it for worship, nor would they do anything extra on it than the rest of the nights of the year. This is because the Prophet is not glorified except in the way that it has been legislated to glorify him." ⁵⁷

Abū Zur'ah Aḥmad Ibn 'Abdir-Raḥīm ash-Shāfi'ī (d. 826 H.) said: "We do not know it from the *Salaf*, even if it is by giving food." ⁵⁸

Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī ash-Shawkānī (d. 1250 H.) said: "Until now, I have not found evidence which indicates its confirmation from the Book, nor the *Sunnah*, nor *Ijmā'*, nor *Qiyās*, nor something to be used as an argument. Rather, the Muslims formed consensus that it was not present in the era of the best of generations, nor those who came after them, nor those who came after them." ⁵⁹

Conclusion

These are some of the more important issues that should be known about the celebration of the Mawlid. As can be seen, this celebration was started by a group of apostates (the $F\bar{a}timiyyah$) in imitation of disbelievers (the Christians). So on top of the lack of evidence to sanction the celebration of the Mawlid (as discussed in the companion piece to this article), there are also many reasons that would support the prohibition of such celebrations. And Allāh Knows Best.

Haytham Āl Sayfaddīn

^{56 &}quot;Fatāwā ash-Shāţibī", pg. 203-204

⁵⁷ "Al-Mi'yār al-Mu'arrab wal-Jāmi' al-Mugharrab", Vol. 99-101.

⁵⁸ "Tashnīf al-Āthān", pg. 136.

⁵⁹ "Al-Fat'ḥ ar-Rabbānī", Vol. 2/1087